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Giving Sincere Advice

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The giving of sincere advice enjoys a sublime and exalted position in Islam, and how could this not be so? The Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) considered the giving of sincere advice on a par with the religion as whole. The Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Religion is giving sincere advice."

A person would give sincere advice to others when he loves and sympathizes with them, when he wishes goodness for them, and when he wishes to thwart evil and harm from them. Thus, Ibn Al-Atheer (May Allah have mercy on him) said that giving sincere advice is an indication of the advisor's wish to bring about goodness for the one advised.

The Companions (May Allah be pleased with them) gave an oath of allegiance to the Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) that they would sincerely advise the Muslims: Jareer ibn 'Abdullaah (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "I gave the oath of allegiance to the Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) that I would perform prayers, pay the Zakaah, and give advice to every Muslim."

In fact, a person who sincerely advises people, seeking goodness for them, is one of the vicegerents of Allah The Almighty upon the earth. Al-Hasan (May Allah have mercy on him) said, "There still exist persons who give sincere advice for the sake of Allah The Almighty. They sincerely advise people for the sake of Allah and educate them as to what is due to Him. They implement the order of Allah The Almighty upon the earth by giving sincere advice - and these are the vicegerents of Allah upon the earth."

To Whom Should Sincere Advice be Given?

Sincere advice is for Allah, His Messenger, His Book, and to the Muslim leaders and the public at large. Imaam ibn Hajar (May Allah have mercy on him) said,

Sincere advice for Allah The Almighty means describing Him with the appropriate attributes, submitting to Him overtly and covertly, seeking His pleasure through obeying Him, fearing His anger by not disobeying Him, and striving to help sinners return to Him.

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Sincere advice for His Book means learning and teaching it, reciting and writing its letters properly, understanding its meanings, observing its boundaries, applying its instructions and rebutting the allegations that fabricators try to raise against it.

Sincere advice for His Messenger means venerating him, supporting him during his life and after his death, reviving his Sunnah by learning and teaching it, following his example in sayings and actions, and loving him and his followers.

Sincere advice to the Muslim leaders means assisting them in the tasks with which they are assigned, alerting them when they are heedless, covering their unintentional mistakes, uniting people upon their obedience, and guiding straying hearts back to them. The greatest sincere advice that a person may give to them is to prevent them - in the best way possible - from oppression.

The Imaams of Ijtihad [those who issue rulings] are among the Muslim leaders, and sincere advice to them means disseminating their knowledge and merits and thinking good of them.

Sincere advice to the Muslim masses means having compassion for them, seeking what benefits them, teaching them what is useful for them, preventing harm from them, loving for them what a person would love for himself, and hating for them what a person would hate for himself.

Shaykh 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Naasir As-Sa'di (May Allah have mercy on him) said, "Sincere advice for Allah and His Messenger implies true belief in them, sincerity in making Jihaad (fighting in the cause of Allah), determination to perform it when one can do so, and trying one's best to encourage and urge Muslims to do so. Sincere advice begins with sincerely advising oneself first, for rarely will a person advise others sincerely if he cheats himself."

The Messengers were the Most Concerned of all with Sincerely Advising Their People

The Prophets of Allah, may Allah exalt their mention, endeavored to call people to Allah. They were extremely keen on guiding them and spared no effort in giving them sincere advice. For instance, Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) Nūh (Noah) (peace be upon him) said to his people: {But [I] am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I convey to you the messages of my Lord and advise you...} [Quran 7:61-62] The messengers who succeeded Nūh (peace be upon him) followed his way in giving sincere advice. Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) said to his people: {I am to you a trustworthy adviser.} [Quran 7:68] Prophet Saalih (peace be upon him) (said: {I advised you, but you do not like advisors.} [Quran 7:79] Prophet Shu'ayb (peace be upon him) said: {O my people, I had certainly conveyed to you the messages of my Lord and advised you.} [Quran 7:93]

Also, the Companions of Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) Muhammad confirmed that he conveyed the message of Allah The Exalted and sincerely advised his people. It was narrated on the authority of Jaabir (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) said to his Companions: "You will be questioned about me [in the Hereafter]; what are you going to say?" They replied, "We will testify that you have conveyed the message, fulfilled it and have given sincere advice."

Giving Sincere Advice is a Due Right upon a Muslim from His Brother

The Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) considered the giving of

sincere advice as one of the greatest rights that are due upon Muslims; he said: "There are six rights due upon a Muslim from his Muslim brother..." one of which was: "... giving him sincere advice if he asks for it." The Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) also said: "If any of you consults his [Muslim] brother, he [the latter] should sincerely advise him."

Allah The Almighty has doubled the reward of the sincere advisor who gives his advice hoping for the wellbeing of other Muslims. It was narrated on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "If a slave sincerely advises his master and worships Allah properly, he will have his reward doubled." Moreover, he will be one of the first people to enter Paradise. He also said: "I have been shown the three types of people who will enter Paradise first: A martyr; a chaste person who sought chastity; and a slave who worshipped Allah properly and gave sincere advice to his masters."

Etiquettes of Sincerely Giving Advice

Advice has a sublime position in Islam. A beneficial sincere advice is the one in which the advisor abides by the etiquettes of the Sharee'ah that the scholars have mentioned. Among those etiquettes are:

- 1- The advisor should give his advice sincerely for the sake of Allah The Almighty, without seeking ostentation, fame, worldly gain or showing superiority.
- 2- The advisor should have enough knowledge about the advice which he is giving. This is because advising is a form of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. If a person does not have enough knowledge about what he is advising about, he may forbid the good, thinking that he is forbidding an evil, and vice versa.
- 3- He should give it privately. Giving advice publicly is a reproach and rebuke that is disliked. Mis'ar ibn Kidaam said, "May Allah have mercy upon a person who presented my faults to me in secret, for giving advice in public is a rebuke."
- 4- Gentleness in giving advice and avoiding excess and rebuke. The Prophet (prayer and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Gentleness does not enter anything except that it adorns it."

On his part, the one being advised should listen to the advice, apply the good that it contains and rid himself of the evil desires of the self. The righteous predecessors would consider advice a gift that the advisor had presented them. 'Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "May Allah have mercy upon a person who gifted me my faults!" Also the advisee should not let harshness of the advisor deprive him of benefiting from the advice.

We ask Allah The Almighty to make us all from those who listen to speech and follow the best of it.


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